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Minutes 02/26/2007

FINAL Minutes of the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee
February 26, 2007, Jefferson Cutter House

Present: Joseph A. Curro, Jr. (Chair), Greg Jackmauh, Lisa Lazarczyk, Alfonso Sira

Following a snafu with the building alarm, the meeting was called to order at approximately 7:15 p.m.

The chair greeted new members Lisa Lazarczyk and Alfonso Sira and informed them of their responsibility to report to the Town Clerk's office to be officially sworn in as new members.

The committee heard an update from Jake Upton of Symmes Redevelopment Associates. He indicated that meetings with finance folks were ongoing and that 100% drawings were close to completion. SRA was in the process of getting bids and numbers to go with the financing. They hoped to begin work in early summer, before which a more comprehensive program and community meeting was planned.

Looking at the financial side, SRA plans to do a condo project, but have the project underwritten as rental, rather than as a condo.

SRA is looking to phase as much as possible at once, and is looking at different options. Their goal is to get everything up in one phase. The exterior design of buildings will not change at all. On the interiors, floor plans should be the same for units, with some difference in interior finishing. Mr. Upton noted that it is a challenge to sell condos in the current market, and that it is not prudent to go to market now as a condo project. He stated a need to be prepared, and he stressed that Fish currently manages 15,000 rental units across the state.

Permits are as apartments; the land disposition agreement transfers pretty well, but some amendments are needed. The phasing of the land purchase is over 36 months; 24 months if go in upfront, and a potential long duration if stick with the original plan.

Medical office plans are on a separate track, derailed when Caritas Cristi was transferred to a national health care provider. Until latest development, there was a drive for the medical office building to be larger than originally envisioned. Focus is now on wellness centers.

Committee member Greg Jackmauh asked about the build it all at once approach. Mr. Upton said that this enhances the value if everything goes in as a single phase and that SRA would not take the risk of simply building out the exterior.

Mr. Upton reported that SRA was close to gaining approval on their 100% drawings, pending the outcome of discussions relating to the settlement agreement for resident appeals of SRA's permits.

Mr. Upton said that there was a possibility of increasing planned caliper size of replacement trees.

In response to a question from the chair, Mr. Upton said that he has notified the relevant subcontractor about a broken section of construction fence. Mr. Upton has also looked into the dumping of sand and other materials, which he has observed at the lower helipad.

Mr. Upton reported that MassHighway contractor D.W. White did not do the construction of curb work at Summer Street correctly. He also said that Fish has an obligation to purchase lights, that they had just received the final stamp of approval from the Town, and that they planned to remobilize everything. Sections of sidewalk are being designed.

There was discussion of potential Woodside Lane sidewalks, which might affect some side or front yards by Vista Circle. Mr. Upton reported that there was a poll conducted on Oakhill regarding traffic calming, but that a similar poll had not -- to his knowledge -- been carried out on Woodside.

The chair asked about how the potential post-occupancy conversion from rental to condominium would affect the affordable housing component of the project. Mr. Upton answered that inhabitants of affected units might have the option to buy these units as affordable units.

Committee member Lisa Lazarczyk asked a question about renting the main buildings while selling the townhouse units. Mr. Upton stated that Ed Fish had done conversions, but that from a marketing perspective it is not the easiest thing to do. He stated that affordable units may need to be specifically designated and tracked individually.

Mr. Upton informed the Committee that Suffolk Construction would no longer be working on the project, and that Delbrook Construction had been selected in their place.

Mr. Upton promised to post 100% drawings in an accessible location.

The chair promised to ensure that new committee members had access to the Neighborhood Protection Plan.

Following Mr. Upton's presentation, there was a brief discussion of the timetable for bringing a Designated Town Representative on board and the RFP that was issued to fill this position. Mr. Jackmauh stated his belief that the DTR should be on board at the time of closing on the land and asked Mr. Upton his opinion. Mr. Upton answered that he believed the DTR must be in place no later than one month before the community meeting.

The Committee then reviewed and approved outstanding meeting minutes.

There followed a discussion of committee organization. The chair opened the question of electing officers to convene the committee in his absence and to maintain the minutes. The committee chose to defer action.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.